

**Minutes
Business Advisory Committee**

September 18th, 2013

Newton City Hall Council Chambers - 401 North Main Avenue

The Business Advisory Committee met at 3:00 p.m. on Wednesday September 18th, 2013 at Newton City Hall.

Members

Present:

Jerry Hodge Donny Setzer
Jeremy Petty John Stiver
Tom Warlick Don Essary

Members

Absent:

Nick Martin
Joe Beaman
Neal Powell

Staff Present:

City Manager Todd Clark Assistant City Manager Sean Hovis
Mayor Anne Stedman
Rob Powell, Community Development Coordinator

Item 1: Minutes - Rob Powell requested approval for minutes from the August meeting as well as the minutes from January, February, March, April, May, and June 2013. In the interest of time, Chairman John Stiver postponed consideration of the all the minutes except for the August meeting. Donny Setzer moved to approve the August minutes, seconded by Jeremy Petty, and approved by those present.

Item 2: Business Update - Chairman John Stiver requested a business update at this time. Rob Powell reported that the new owner of the Hardee's building still had not decided what to do with the building. Rob also noted the new business in Plaza Latina, Tortilleria el Ayate, and the new automotive bearing distribution company that will be leasing a building on Shea Road, WJB Automotive.

Item 3: Small Business Banking Opportunities - Chairman John Stiver introduced three speakers from BB&T who spoke on commercial banking – Jeremy Krech, Pam Jenkins, and Liz Kakacek. The BB&T team described their roles at the bank and informed the BAC members of the range of business services offered by BB&T. Mr. Krech and the BAC members engaged in a discussion of the current loan and credit situation for small businesses.

Chairman John Stiver then introduced Dean Shepherd from the Newton branch of First Citizens Bank. Mr. Shepherd explained the key factors that First Citizens underwriters need to have to review a small business loan application. Mr. Shepherd says that startup owners often must begin with a personal loan in order to build the cash flow history needed for a small business loan.

Item 4: Master Economic Development Plan - Chairman John Stiver and Rob Powell reviewed the notes added to the draft Master Economic Development Plan resulting from the last BAC meeting. Jeremy Petty said he thought the work to date was good. John Stiver stated that this plan would remain flexible and would be expanded as time progressed, and he would like to present this as a BAC-supported plan at one of the October city council meetings. Jeremy Petty moved that the current notes be added to the plan and that the plan be approved for presentation to City Council with those notes added. The motion was seconded by Jerry Hodge and approved by those present.

Item 5: Other New Business (Touch Screen Info Center) - Jerry Hodge and Don Essary initiated a discussion on the plan to install an interactive information kiosk in the OPOP lobby or other location accessible to visitors. Don listed several issues that must be resolved for the project to be further developed, such as ownership and control of the touch screen, who would sell ads that would run on the screen, and how the up-front capital needs would be generated. Don also said he wanted to investigate the new weather-proof, outdoor screens as an option and that he would get costs for the hardware. Don visualizes the touch screens providing valuable visitor information such as interactive maps and directions to destinations, venue information, a community events calendar, and maybe even ticket sales and business coupons. Advertising revenue could be dedicated to the improvement of the downtown. A discussion continued on the best organization to handle such a project – the City, a private entity, a merchants group or Chamber of Commerce, a non-profit, or maybe a public/private cooperative organization. Don said that it could take three months of work just to develop the system. Jerry Hodge volunteered to organize a task force within the BAC to address some of these issues and to report back at the October BAC meeting. The Committee decided to set a goal of announcing a plan for the info center at the January 2014 Newton Business Meeting. Don Essary and Mayor Stedman will help Jerry with this project.

Item 6: Review of the Branding and Wayfinding Program – Rob Powell advised the Committee that Bizzell Design had completed a large portion of the technical work on the wayfinding project. Buzz Bissell plans to bring the completed DOT package to us in mid-October. The branding direction is still under discussion, but Buzz says the sign appearance can be finalized later once a decision is made on a brand and logo.

Item 7: Streetscape Master Plan Review Committee - Rob Powell updated the Committee on the last Streetscape Master Plan Review Committee (SMPRC) meeting held on September 10th. City staff will be preparing a Request for Qualifications for a design firm to prepare a detailed design for the downtown streetscape. The SMPRC will prepare an evaluation process for reviewing the design firms which respond to the RFQ.

Item 8: Meeting Schedule and Adjournment – The next scheduled meeting of the Business Advisory Committee is October 16th, 2013 at 3:00 pm. The main subjects will be the touch screen project and the wayfinding project. Chairman Stiver adjourned the meeting at 5:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Rob Powell, Recording Secretary